

Her Book's In Pictures... But When The Movie
Plays Is Anybody's Guess

By SHIRLEY LAZARUS

MORRISTOWN — You are a published author, and your book has been a selection in the Reader's Digest Condensed Books, autumn 1970, and the picture based on the book will be released March 15 with actress Rosalind Russell in the starring role.

And you have been invited to the gala opening, to share the limelight with Hollywood personalities, now that you are famous . . .

Right?

Wrong, ruefully admitted Dorothy Gilman, 17 Colles Ave., authoress of "The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax," re-dubbed "Mrs. Pollifax-Spy" by the moviemakers.

"No one has told me where the opening will be held, here in New York or on the West Coast," she said.

She hasn't heard a word either about a world premiere of the film in London on Feb. 17.

Furthermore, she admitted, she first learned of the opening and saw cuts of the film just a few weeks ago, when it was shown on TV.

The life of a writer just isn't as romantic as our stories say it is, observed Mrs. Gilman.

The romance of make-believe began long ago for Dorothy Gilman.

As a skinny, slight, ten-year-old in a long green dress, Mrs. Gilman remembers day-dreaming about the life of a female spy, possibly a glamorous Mata Hari.

It didn't take long for those dreams to take a plunge, when her interests turned to a future as a deep sea diver.

Only after she was awarded first prize for a story in a local newspaper in New Brunswick at age 11, did Dorothy Gilman set her sights on being a writer.

"I guess a little bit of you is in

every story you write," she noted. Mrs. Pollifax is from New Brunswick in the book.

After a mild success with an even dozen books, mostly for teenagers—the first was a whimsical piece, "Enchanted Caravan," in 1949—she thought of a plot revolving about a woman spy.

"Rather than the run-of-the-mill beautiful broad," she explained, "I made her sweet and grandmotherly, a most unlikely, lovable new candidate for the ranks of secret agent."

Mrs. Gilman couldn't remember how she chose the name Emily Pollifax, but it seemed somehow to fit.

The adventures that did happen to this believable character are somehow so unexpected and thereby hangs the success of the tale.

From the day "The Unexpected Mrs. Pollifax" was published in 1963, it was optioned by Fred Brisson, husband of Rosalind Russell.

Trouble with the script kept it on a shelf for a while; then Universal tried to get it going, said the attractive, dark-haired novelist.

Finally, United Artists took charge; Miss Russell got the lead, and the film was in production last year.

"I understand Rosalind Russell liked the story line so much that she wasn't happy with the movie script, she contributed to the writing, using her mother's maiden name for screen credits," said Mrs. Gilman.

Nobody thought of consulting the author.

Part of the setting for the foreign intrigue was in Mexico and part in Albania.

Mrs. Gilman confessed she had never been in Albania, but hoped that was also true of her readers.

Besides, it was the only European country with an affiliation with

China, needed to give credibility to her story, she said.

A second Mrs. Pollifax adventure, an equal success, was "The Amazing Mrs. Pollifax," published by Doubleday about a year ago.

This takes the secret agent to Turkey for a go-around with our "nation's enemies," under the cloak of the CIA.

The third book in the series is "The Elusive Mrs. Pollifax," with the setting this time in Bulgaria.

Completely intrigued and involved in the continuity of Mrs. Pollifax, Dorothy Gilman spent some time in Bulgaria as she was writing the book.

She noted that the Pollifax series has become her bread and butter, but that in-between a more serious novel, the "Uncertain Voyage," a psychological suspense story about a woman recovering from a nervous crack-up had a measure of success.

"My writing is pure escapism," she said, "and is successful because of it."

"I wrote as a hobby for years. Now it gets harder and harder because people expect more."

She admitted taking the phone off the hook and working at her typewriter a minimum of six hours a day.

The rewards for Dorothy Gilman are evident.

Just as soon as she learns the nearest theater that will be showing "Mrs. Pollifax-Spy," she plans to buy her ticket and see her dream come alive.

Another dream is also destined to come true.

Traveling has always been high on her preferred list.

Within the next several months, Doubleday is sending her to a Spa in Switzerland, all expenses paid, for background on another Pollifax book, still unnamed.